

FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT: MEDIATED AND MODERATED BY WOMEN POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NORMS

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ABSTRACT

The growing pace of female entrepreneurs is steadily accelerating across the world. Female entrepreneurs lag far behind their male counterparts, and this difference can be explained by different political, cultural and social factors. Literature concurs that a supportive entrepreneurial environment is necessary for growth of entrepreneurship for both males and females. Aim behind conducting this research is to inspect whether any relationship exists between participation of females in labour market and female entrepreneurial environment of a country or otherwise. Furthermore, it is proposed that this relationship is mediated by political empowerment of women and moderated by cultural and social norms. To test the proposed framework, data regarding variables involved in the study was obtained from different sources of Year 2015. Regression analysis was performed on the data, and the results proved the model proposed in the study. This model shows that female labour force participation, women political empowerment and cultural and social norms collaborate with one another to shape the national environment conducive for female entrepreneurship.

KEY WORDS: Female Entrepreneurship, Female Labour Force Participation, Women Political Empowerment, Cultural and Social Norms

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of female entrepreneurship exists around the globe regardless of variation between countries (Estrin & Mickiewicz, 2011). Scholars agree that the number of female entrepreneurs is increasing in all the countries despite low level of overall entrepreneurial activities (Danish & Smith, 2012). Till yet, there are few female entrepreneurs as compared to their male counterparts. Women owned enterprises are still restricted to informal sectors of economy such as retail and personal service sectors (Bosma, 2013). Factors such as resource constraints, low risk aversion, environmental uncertainty etc. force females to engage in low growth sectors. Due to this, women owned businesses are generally labelled as micro-enterprises and they offer only 41% employment opportunities to other people (Welter, 2004). Hence, it is necessary to create a supportive environment for the growth of female entrepreneurship. It is agreed that active participation of women in labour market results in greater diversity at workplace (Sawicka & Lagoda, 2015).

Although, gender gap in the labour force participation is gradually reducing; however, its progress is rather slow (Klasen, 2016). Even today, working women may face direct discrimination in the form of preference based discrimination or indirect discrimination such as glass ceiling (Cavalcanti & Tavares, 2016). These discriminatory practices prompt women already engaged in employment to start their own business. At times, women attempt to balance their work and domestic life. As earners, these working women are major contributors towards their family's wellbeing (Albotmeh & Irsheid, 2013). Hence, they cannot quit their occupation. So, they find self-employment as a better choice to support their children and family. Whatever, the reason may be it has been observed that working women exhibit greater tendency to start their own business. But, socio-cultural factors have profound effect on the extent to which working women may engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Cultural context is believed to be responsible for shaping attitude towards entrepreneurship in a society (Shinnar, Giacomini, & Janssen, 2012). Cultural norms have considerable effect on the business initiatives, since they force the owner to bear in mind the socio-cultural situation of the local community (Wach, 2015). This forces women to look for occupations which are considered to be socially accepted for their gender. As

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entrepreneurship is regarded as male dominated field (Ahl, 2006) women are discouraged to become entrepreneurs. In many societies, working women become a stigma. Unfortunately, culturally imposed barriers are detrimental in achieving financial independence among women (Morris et al., 2006). However, such practices are gradually declining in many countries. Thanks to changes in society, more women are becoming entrepreneurs due to higher education, previous employment, political empowerment and economic independence (McGowan et al., 2012). As a result, women entrepreneurship is on rise especially in developing countries.

Political empowerment of women is another factor which can potentially effect participation of women in entrepreneurial activities. Political power held by women can help them overcome barriers in growth of their business (Goltz, Buche, & Pathak, 2015). Political empowerment of women is expressed by their representation in parliament. This representation enables women to break free from social stereotypes and increase their capacity for decision making (Kobeissi, 2010). Hence, empowering women and gender development helps in making female owned business more successful. For this reason, countries characterized by more political empowerment, give more incentives to female entrepreneurs. In such countries, women already employed have greater opportunities to start their own businesses.

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Social structure and collective environment have received less attention in the literature of women entrepreneurship as compared to individual factors of entrepreneur (Lock & Smith, 2016). This is ascertained by Ahl (2006), that in the research of female entrepreneurship “contextual and historical variables...such as legislation, culture, or politics are seldom discussed”. Moreover, Teo (1996), categorized problems faced by female entrepreneurs grouped into start – up problems, problems at the time of launch of the business and problems after launch of business. Majority of research on female entrepreneurship has focused on business startup. For this purpose, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor has been widely used and its TEA score is considered to measure level of female entrepreneurship. However, in prior research the issues faced by women after launching of business are seldom attended (Martin & Wright, 2005). Therefore, very few studies have considered the problem faced by female entrepreneurs after the establishment of firm. In this research, focus is on the overall legal, political, cultural and institutional structure which supports /resists towards female entrepreneurship. Considering the factors, this study tends to uncover women political empowerment as an underlying mechanism and cultural and social norms as a boundary condition of association between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment.

A model is proposed which shows the interaction between aforementioned four factors in determining women entrepreneurial environment. For this purpose, data regarding female entrepreneurship is collected from Female Entrepreneurial Index in order to explain the overall worldwide entrepreneurial environment for women. Data at country level is considered following Goltz, Buche and Pathak (2015) who believe that using country-specific variables is a better approach than individual related factors. Such broader scope will help in the reliability and generalization of results since most studies of female entrepreneurship are limited to a given region or country (Kobeissi, 2010).

Conclusively, this study investigates (a) the effect of labour force participation on female entrepreneurial environment (b) to what extent political empowerment mediates between labour force participation and

female entrepreneurial environment (c) whether cultural norms strengthens or weakens the on female entrepreneurship. Interaction between these variables can be used to understand the variation in the level of female business ventures across different countries. Female entrepreneurship is gaining importance because “*there is perhaps no greater initiative a country can take to accelerate its pace of entrepreneurial activity than to encourage more of its women to participate*” (Reynolds et al., 2001, cited in Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006). Hence, female entrepreneurship is helpful in promoting economic growth as it ensures gender development and poverty reduction (Maniyalath & Narendran, 2016). For this purpose, it is more suitable to study female entrepreneurial environment at country level because it is more closely related to general socio-economic, political and institutional conditions of a country.

The structure of this paper is as follow. After this introduction, the following section deals with hypothesis development as well as the research design. Subsequently, results of the regression analysis, recommendation for policy makers, and conclusion are documented.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Female entrepreneurship rose to prominence in 1970s (Berger & Kuckertz, 2016), when researcher started to think “entrepreneurship is a gendered phenomenon” (Jennings & Brush, 2013). The domain has come a long way since then. Presently, the number of self-employed females is steadily increasing, but most female-owned enterprises are still operating in low value added and crowded sectors (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). These sectors demonstrate low growth in employment, profitability and market share. Women owned and managed business enterprises grow at a slower pace than their male counterparts (Morris et al., 2006) despite a relatively higher rate of participation of female in entrepreneurship (Adom & Asare-Yeboah, 2016). Women entrepreneurs face problems such as financing, management practice, growth strategies and entrepreneurial policies (Noguera et al., 2015).

According to Sara & Peter (1998) new female entrepreneurs can experience problem in obtaining start-up capital, credit guarantee, capital for investment. On the contrary, man engage more in entrepreneurship due to better access to capital (Brush & Cooper, 2012). Unlike men, women are believed to be motivated by non-economic goals and spend more time in pursuing social goals (Berger & Kuckertz, 2016; Nicolas & Rubio, 2016). Women are believed to have conservative attitude towards growth and their business plans focus on moderate expansion. It may be attributed to the “time constraints imposed by family responsibility” (Poggesi, Mari, & De Vita, 2016).

Just like men, many women become entrepreneur in order to attain financial independence. But, most of the female entrepreneurs attempt to balance their work and domestic responsibility (McGowan et al., 2012). Females are expected to work as housewives and look after their children while men are free from such responsibilities. Family responsibility and domestic obligations makes the decision for women to participate in business ventures more complicated. Care of children, domestic obligations and longer working hours in home have negative effect on the growth of female owned businesses (Hundley, 2001). Due to these obligations women have low propensity towards entrepreneurship as compared to males (Morris et al., 2006), “and this is true for worldwide” (Jennings & Brush, 2013).

Initially researchers had assumed that female entrepreneurs possess characteristics similar to male ones and female entrepreneurship doesn't require special attention (Jennings & Brush, 2013). However, later research revealed considerable difference between entrepreneurial practices of males and females (Kobeissi, 2010). Entrepreneurship roles are connected with masculine traits such as bold, aggressiveness, risk taking, calculative etc. (Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006). Female owned enterprises exhibit feminised working pattern where care for social responsibility has same value as economic growth. Hence, it is imperative that female entrepreneurship should be studied independently from its male counterparts. Feminist theorists argue that gender is a social issue and women are unnecessarily at disadvantage due to

particular social orientation (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Female theorists also sort to end such constraints and obstacles, and ensure equal playing ground for both men and women.

Literature on female entrepreneurship focuses on individual, social and institutional factors (Perez & Hernandez, 2016). However, individual factors alone are not sufficient to fully describe entrepreneurship (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Therefore, a more comprehensive definition of entrepreneurship should include social and contextual factors. This is more relevant for the study of entrepreneurship in women since “macro-level factors seek to explain (female) entrepreneurial venturing, growth and change by considering a generic set of broader impersonal institutions, including political, economic, historical, social, cultural and educational institutions” (Naguib & Jamali, 2015). Therefore, this study includes the role of economic, political, cultural and social factors which may promote or inhibit growth of entrepreneurial activities in females.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Female labour force participation and their political empowerment

Increased participation of women in labour force has led to more representation of women in parliament. Iversen and Rosenbluth (2008) have explained this in terms of demand and supply. Working women demand more political empowerment and representation in parliament. These women have difference preference and voting patterns as compared to their male counterparts. Accordingly, working women are inclined to vote for females (Inglehart & Norris, 2003) for representing them in legislation. On the contrary, countries characterized by low representation of female in the labour market have greater “gender gap in political preferences and voting behaviour” (Iversen & Rosenbluth, 2006).

On the supply side, parents are focusing on the education and professional careers of their daughters. These changing social norms have allowed women to have technical and managerial education at par with men, and they are entering labour market at faster rate. High qualification for women means more wages for women in many countries which have influenced their women’s ability to attract political power. This has encouraged political parties to make females as their candidates in order to give positive signals to working women (Rosenbluth et al. 2006). Women with higher managerial and technical experience are more likely to start their political career. In addition, working women are also doing collective efforts for safeguard their interests.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between female labour force participation and their political empowerment.

Female labour force participation and entrepreneurial environment for them

Participation of labour in the market increases the chances of women to launch their own business. This is so because women already employed in the formal sectors find very little opportunities of career growth due to gender discrimination. Sawicka and Lagoda (2015) have used certain discriminatory practices such as glass ceiling, glass walls, sticky floors and tokenism etc. that prevent progress of women to top positions in the organization which are generally associated with power. Sometimes, the organizational structure thwarts the progress of female. Current organizations are not only segregated in terms of male and female intensive jobs, but also there exists conspicuous stratification. Due to this, mostly females hold low level jobs and very few reach the top level of management (Jennings & Brush, 2013). The frustration caused due to lack of promotion opportunities forces women to start-up (McGowan et al., 2012).

Previous research has demonstrated that prior experience of labour market and management position has significant influence on entrepreneurial activities (Davidsson & Honig, 2003). In their exploratory research on female entrepreneurs in Kosovo, Ramadani et al., (2015) have found that 28% of the female respondent

regarded lack of experience as the major problem faced in developing their business. Occasionally, women are labelled with features suggesting that they are incapable of being a successful entrepreneur (Rubio-Banon & Esteban-Lloret, 2016). Due to low participation rate in employment, women lag behind men in obtaining managerial skills which are deemed necessary to start their own business (Hattab, 2012). Furthermore, women with previous experience in a given business sector are likely to become part of more productive and higher growth sectors (Marques, 2017).

There exists a wage gap between male and female workers holding same position in any organization. Feminist theory postulates that occupational segregation and gender wage inequality as driving factor for women to leave their employment and start their own business. Occupational segregations force them to move towards informal sectors and start their own business (Lock & Smith, 2016). Previous research has found a negative relation between wage gap and female entrepreneurial initiatives. For instance, Baldwin and Johnson (1992) have found a negative relationship between the wage gap and participation of women in the labour market. Feminist theorists argue that gender is a social issue and women are unnecessarily at disadvantage due to particular social orientation (Jennings & Brush, 2013). Feminist theorists also sort to end such constraints and obstacles, and ensure equal playing ground for both men and women.

Hence, it is proposed that a higher level of female participation in labour market will encourage more women enter in entrepreneurship. Employed men and women are more likely to start their own business (Minniti & Nardone, 2007). As number of females participating in the labour market increases, female entrepreneurial activities also boost (Chowdhury & Audretsch, 2014). Participation of female in labour force will flourish the potential of female entrepreneurs (Verheul, Stel, & Thurik, 2006). Therefore, participation of women in labour market will lead to a supportive environment for female entrepreneurship.

Hypothesis No 2: There is a positive relationship between participation of female in labour force and their entrepreneurial environment.

Women political empowerment and female entrepreneurial environment

Overall situation of political empowerment of women in a country can encourage them to become entrepreneurs. Due to their low empowerment in the society, women faces more hurdles in starting a business as compared to men. However, such hurdles can be greatly reduced by enhancing active participation of women in political activities. Participation in political activities can be a potent way to empower women (Okock & Melesse, 2014). In turn, women representation in the politics creates a level-playing for them in conducting business. According to Goltz, Buche and Pathak (2015) “a greater number of women in the political positions at all level, from local to national, is likely to advance policies that enable and promote women’s economic participation”. This political representation not only increases the likelihood for more women to start their own business but also helps to create a supportive environment for female entrepreneurial activities to flourish.

Political representation in parliament and legislative forums is also believed to development of entrepreneurial environment for women. Women parliamentarians are regarded as important social agents, and their actions are crucial in promoting entrepreneurship. Participation of women in political activities enables them to be socially and politically active which helps in safeguarding their interests and shaping policies accordingly (Manda & Mwakubo, 2014). Women leaders are also believed to be capable of affecting the institutional environment (Ghani, Kerr, & O'Connell, 2014). They can lift the burden of institutional and financial constraints from their fellow entrepreneurs. Removal of such constraints increase bargaining power of women, and helps them to acquire more resources (Goltz, Buche, & Pathak, 2015).

Hypothesis No 3: There is a positive relationship between political empowerment of women and their entrepreneurial environment.

Women political empowerment as a mediator between female labour force participation and female entrepreneurship environment

The inability to enter in to employment forces females to opt for self-employment. In certain countries having high unemployment rates there are very few job opportunities for females. Women belonging to such countries have no other option to enter into self-employment. Furthermore, the cultural and social norms stress on women's family responsibilities in these countries. Therefore, those women who are employed may find it difficult to reconcile family demands with inflexible employment in the formal sector (Baughn, Chua, & Neupert, 2006). Therefore, women move from formal sectors of employment to informal sector with a conscious attempt to balance their work and domestic responsibilities. These informal sectors give women flexible employment options which seem difficult to attain in traditional labour market (Budig, 2006).

It is observed that females already employed in the labour market are more aware of the difficulties faced in starting business ventures. Earning women are more self-sufficient and they show greater tendency to participate in political activities. Women empowerment is a situation where women have equal opportunity for growth, and they are fully independent to make their own decisions (Saraswathy, Panicker, & Sumi, 2008). The concept of empowerment for women becomes more important in traditional patriarchal societies where men enjoy more powers.

According to Motivational Theory of Role Modelling (Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015), role models aspire people to set and attain ambitious goals. Women already running their own business as well as playing active role in politics parliament become a role model for other women. They demonstrate the set of skills and behaviours which are necessary to achieve success (Lockwood, 2006). They motivate others and show that the goals are attainable. These role models are bunch of successful in a given group and they send the message: "I can do this, so can you" (Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015). In threatening situations, women may look up to these role models for motivation (McIntyre et al, 2011).

Women already in the labour market also create conducive environment for business start-ups for women. Women can use their political representation in parliament and other forums to eliminate obstacles related with launching new business ventures. Ultimately, women representation in parliament will lead to supportive environment for women business start-ups. Hence, it is proposed that a higher number of women participating in the labour market will make them more politically empowered which will in turn results in a supportive environment for women entrepreneurial activities.

Hypothesis No 4: Women political empowerment mediates the relationship between participation of female in labour force and their entrepreneurial environment in a country.

Moderating effect of cultural and social norms between female labour force participation and female entrepreneurship environment

North (1990), in his highly cited work, has differentiated between formal and informal institutes. While formal institutes regulate the business environment through rules, laws and procedures; the informal institutes are norm, behaviour, and code of conduct existing in a society (Aidis et al., 2007) and manifested as its culture (Noguera et al., 2015). A person's attitude towards entrepreneurship is shaped by the social and cultural norms (Agbim, Ayatse & Oriarewo, 2013). Kostova (1997) has proposed a three dimensional framework to explain institutional profile of a country. These three dimensions include: regulatory dimension, cognitive dimension, and normative dimension. Among these, the normative dimension consists of value system of the country which affects the business activities.

Busenitz, Gomez and Spencer (2000) described that “the normative dimension measures the degree to which a country's residents admire entrepreneurial activity and value creative and innovative thinking.” These informal institutes have significant impact on the business environment of a country as they can encourage or discourage entrepreneurial initiatives (Hayton & Cacciotti, 2013; Poirine, Dropsy, & Gay, 2017). Likewise, these cultural norms also decide whether women are allowed to take part in the economic activities or otherwise. These informal institutions constraint economic activities of females (Klasen, 2016) by imposing restriction on mobility of resources and bargaining power (Goltz, Buche, & Pathak, 2015).

A norm is defined as “a given social setting to the extent that individuals usually act in a certain way and are often punished when seen not to be acting in this way” (Axelrod, 1986 cited in Poirine, Dropsy & Gay, 2017). Gender Role Theory developed by Eagly (1987) postulates that the cultural and social norms rather than biological predispositions define socially acceptable behaviours. For example, the characteristic of family are rooted in the culture and social norms of the society (Berger & Kuckertz, 2016). Society believes that males are responsible for financially supporting their families while women are charged with caring for family, children and other dependents. This role segregation declares that males are ideal gender to start and run a business (Nicolás & Rubio, 2016). This is supported by the fact that entrepreneurship literature is dominated by masculine features (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013). The male dominated and patriarchal cultures have always considered females to be subordinate to males (Foss, Woll, & Moilanen, 2013) which thwart participation of women in business activities.

As described above, cultural norms assign roles to men and women on the basis of gender. Culture of a society is function of the underlying values which guide and motivate a given group in a particular way. Traditional cultural and social roles mean that women are less likely to be engaged in entrepreneurial activities as compared to men. In all societies, role of men and women differ, and men are given more access and control of resources (Owo, 2016). While women are considered to be obligated for rearing children and caring for other dependents, men have no such responsibilities. Resultantly, women are left with very little time for their business.

Cultural norms also create stereotype about gender roles which limits the occupation chooses appropriate for both males and females (Shinnar, Giacomini, & Janssen, 2012). Lippmann (1922) defines stereotype as “simplistic and inaccurate as a result of socially transmitted rather than personal experience, resistant to change, imagination reality, the images in our head”. These stereotypes culminate in gender inequality which limits the social roles performed by females. Such stereotypes ascertain that activities of working women are considered to be in contradiction with the roles assigned by the society (Moreno, 2016). Therefore, stereotypes and gender discriminating practices of a society may discourage women participation in economic activities (Marques, 2017).

Review of the literature shows that cultural and social norms have significant effect on the participation of women in labour market as well as growth of female entrepreneurship in a country. Entrepreneurial societies promotes female participation in economic activates. These women can make contribution towards economic growth when proper opportunities are presented to them (Okah-Efogo & Timba, 2015). On the contrary, lack of entrepreneurial culture in the society is a major impediment which limits female entrepreneurship (Perez & Hernandez, 2016). Such restrictive norms not only reduce involvement of female entrepreneurs in business activities but also inhibit the development of female entrepreneurship. Cultural and social norms can moderator relationship between labour force participation and entrepreneurial environment as “the use of cultural norms rather than cultural values will help solve inconsistencies in findings” (Hayton & Cacciotti, 2013).

Hypothesis No 5: Relationship between female labour force participation and entrepreneurial environment is moderated by cultural and social norms of a country such that higher level of supportive norms will lead to creation of environment supportive for female entrepreneurial activities.

A conceptual model is proposed on the basis of the above hypothesis which is shown in Figure No 1. This model shows that a relationship exists between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment which is mediated by women political empowerment. Moreover, the same relationship is moderated by cultural and social norms.

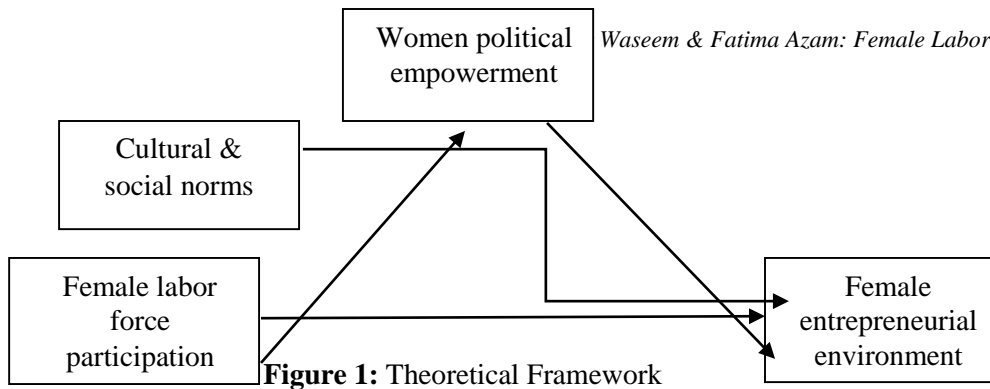


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCE

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of different economic, political, cultural, and social factors of a country in the growth of female entrepreneurship activities. For this purpose, different variables such as labour force participation, female political empowerment, cultural and social norms were considered. Unlike other studies which focus on factors within a country; data at country level was considered in this paper following Goltz, Buche and Pathak (2015) who believe that using country-specific variables is a better approach than individual related factors. Such broader scope helped in the reliability and generalization of results since most studies of female entrepreneurship are limited to a given region or country (Kobeissi, 2010).

Following this, data regarding overall environment for female entrepreneurship was collected from Female Entrepreneurship Index. This index analyses overall conditions for growth of high-potential female entrepreneurship in 77 countries. Unlike other studies on entrepreneurship which involve secondary data analysis, data was not obtained from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. This is because we are interested in finding the overall environment for women entrepreneurial activities instead of actual rate of female entrepreneurs. Therefore, Female Entrepreneurship Index served our intended purpose better. Moreover, data from other variables was also gathered from different reliable sources. In total, data pertaining to 72 countries for 2015 was collected. Table No. 1 shows the sources for variables involved in the study along with the descriptive statistics.

Table No 1: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Name of variable	Data Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female entrepreneurship Environment	Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI) Score 2015	45.58	16.13
Female labour force participation	Human Development Report 2015	51.47	13.34
Female political empowerment	Global Gender Gap Report 2015	0.23	0.15
Cultural & social norms score	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2015	1.86	1.41

Number of Observation = 72

The data collected from the aforementioned sources was then analysed using regression analysis technique. The hypotheses of mediation and moderation were tested using hierarchical regression analysis. Effect size of the moderating variable on the relation between predictor and outcome variables was measured to gauge

the direction of the moderating relationship. Robustness of results of moderation related hypothesis was confirmed through slope test.

RESULTS

After descriptive statistics, bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson’s Correlation Method was performed on the variables under consideration. The results of correlation analysis are given in Table 2. All three independent variables very significantly correlated with the outcome. Women political empowerment, and cultural & social norms were correlated with Female Entrepreneurship Environment at $p < 0.01$ whereas female labour force participation was significant at $p < 0.1$. Moreover, all these predictors were positively associated with Female Entrepreneurship Environment.

Table No 2: Correlation between variables

Name of Variable	1	2	3	4
Female entrepreneurship environment	1			
Female labour force participation	0.200*	1		
Female political empowerment	0.407***	0.219*	1	
Cultural & social norms score	0.362***	0.077	0.263**	1

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, † $p < 0.15$

Afterwards, regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses. All requisite conditions for regression analysis were fulfilled in all cases. Those observations with absolute values of Standardized Residuals beyond 3 were identified as outliers and eventually removed from the analysis (Mendenhall, Sincich, & Boudreau, 2012). Shapiro-Wilk Test was used to check the normality of the data and data was found to be normally distributed. Similarly, Durbin-Watson Statistics and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were used to identify auto-correlation and multi-colinearity, and none were found.

Table 3 illustrates the direct relationship between female labour force participation and their political empowerment. Both the variables were found to be significantly associated with one another; however the value of coefficient of correlation was very low indicating a weak relationship between them. Therefore, our Hypothesis No 1 was partially supported. This result resonates with the previous researchers. Iversen and Rosenbluth (2008) note that representation of females in United States Congress lags far behind their participation in labour market. Kenworthy and Malami (1999) have found very little correlation between female labour force participation and their representation in parliament. This can be attributed to the fact that working women, constrained by time and domestic responsibilities, have less time available for their political career (Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1999). Furthermore, Oakes and Almquist (1993), and Matland (1998) have found similar weak relationship.

Table No 3: Relationship between labor force participation and political empowerment

Name of Variable	1
Female labor force participation	0.002** (0.001)
Constant	0.078 † (0.046)

Value of R² 0.079

Note: Values represent un-standardized coefficients while those in parenthesis are standard deviation of un-standardized coefficients.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, † p<0.15

Table 4 shows that labour force participation is positively related with female entrepreneurial environment at p<0.1. However, there was no relationship between the two variables since the value of R² is very low. Therefore, our second hypothesis was partially proved. Likewise, Table 4 illustrates that female political empowerment was significantly and positively associated with female entrepreneurial environment. Value of coefficient of correlation is higher as compared to the previous instance, but it is still low enough to show a weak relationship. Hence, our third hypothesis was also partially supported.

Table 4 also demonstrates the results of mediating role of female political empowerment on relationship between female labour force participation and female entrepreneurship environment. When women political empowerment is added as mediating variable in the regression model, the value of R² increased and became 0.179. Also, the introduction of the mediating variable rendered labour force participation statistically insignificant; while the mediator itself remained statistically significant. This suggests that women political empowerment mediates the relationship between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment, implying that our fourth hypothesis was also proved. The results are consistent with the Motivational Theory of Role Modelling. Working and parliamentary women as role models are an important factor in attracting women towards their own business (Terjesen, Bosma, & Stam, 2016). These role models induce self-efficacy in other women (Minniti & Nardone, 2007; Noguera et al., 2015); considered to be an important factor for women starting their own business.

Table No 4: Mediating role of female political empowerment on relationship between female labor force participation and female entrepreneurship environment

Name of Variable	2	3	4
Female labor force participation	0.242* (0.142)		0.141 (0.135)
Female political empowerment		44.717*** (11.99)	41.904*** (12.286)
Constant	33.116*** (7.524)	35.306*** (3.26)	28.694*** (7.129)
Value of R²	0.040	0.166	0.179

Note: Values represent un-standardized coefficients while those in parenthesis are standard deviation of un-standardized coefficients.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, † p<0.15

Hypothesis 5 deals with the moderating role of cultural and social norms on the relationship between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment. To test this hypothesis, an interaction term was calculated. For this purpose, both the independent and moderating variables were mean centered. These mean centered values were then multiplied to calculate the interaction term. This interaction term was then introduced in the regression model. Table No 5 shows that the introduction of interaction term causes an increase of 0.077 in the value of R². Furthermore, the interaction term is statistically significant at p<0.05.

Table No 5: Moderating regression of cultural & social norms onto female labor force participation and female entrepreneurship environment

Name of Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	R ²	Δ R ²
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Female labor force participation (FL)	0.242* (0.141)	0.041	0.041*
Cultural and social norms (CSN)	3.972*** (1.267)	0.162	0.121***
Interaction (FL x CSN)	0.240** (0.092)	0.239	0.077**

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, † p<0.15
Number of Observation = 72

In order to test the robustness of the above result, conditional effect of predictor on outcome at values of the moderator was calculated using Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) in SPSS. Table 5 shows that at lower value of moderator (one standard deviation below the mean value), the moderator was statistically insignificant. However, the same was significant at the mean value as well as higher value (one standard deviation above the mean value). Furthermore, the value of effect size constant increases as we move from lower value to mean and then higher value. This shows that the cultural and social norms moderates the relationship between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment at mean and higher value, while at the lower value the same is statistically insignificant.

Table No 6: Effect size of the cultural and social norms on the relation between labor force participation and female entrepreneurial environment

Mean-Centered Value of the cultural and social norms	Effect Size of Moderator on relation between labor force participation and female entrepreneurial environment
-1.4163	0.0206
0	0.3600**
1.4163	0.6994***

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, † p<0.15

Similar, results were obtained from the slope analysis. Figure No 2 shows that the slope of line based on the regression equation of the moderating role of cultural and social norms on the relationship between labour force participation and female entrepreneurial environment. The slope of this was positive for both mean and higher value of moderator. Especially, the slope became steeper at higher value of moderator confirming the results on Table No 5. Therefore, our fifth hypothesis was also proved.

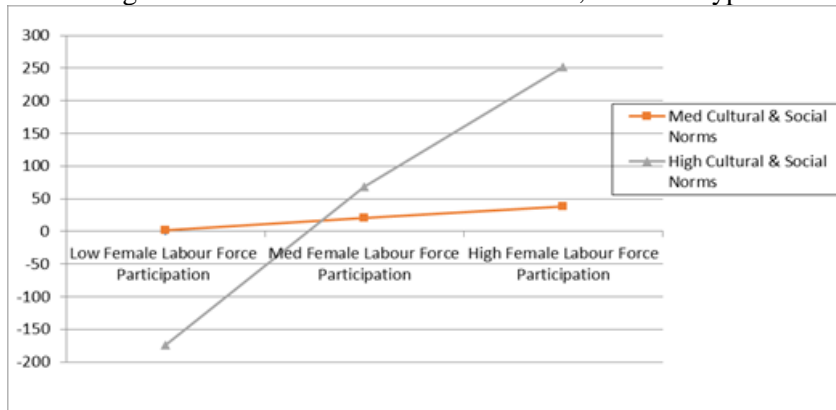


Figure No 2: Moderating regression of cultural & social norms onto female labor force participation and female entrepreneurship environment

DISCUSSION ON RESULTS

As described earlier, purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of different conditions in the growth of women owned businesses in a country. The basic relation discussed in this study was the impact of

participation of women in labour market on overall entrepreneurial environment of a country. Though, the results revealed presence of weak relationship between both variables, even then the importance of employed women cannot be denied. Literature concurs that women working in labour market is a successful move to increase economic growth as it results in better utilization of economic inputs. Increased participation of women in business and entrepreneurial activities can lead to better quality entrepreneurial ventures in the society allowing greater competition, and diversity in “products, processes, forms of organization and targeted markets” (Verheul, Stel, & Thurik, 2006). Likewise, the growth of female founded business is quickly exploiting previously untapped sources of productivity (Nguyen, Frederick, & Nguyen, 2014), resulting in expansion of economy.

In the fourth hypothesis, it was proposed that relationship between female participation in the labour market and female entrepreneurial environment is mediated by women political empowerment. This hypothesis was also proved; suggesting the importance of political empowerment of women in increasing labour force participation and entrepreneurial initiatives. Women holding influential position in the governmental institutions act as role models for others. These role models are an important factor in attracting women towards their own business (Terjesen, Bosma, & Stam, 2016). These role models induce self-efficacy in other women which is considered to be an important factor for women starting their own business. Moreover, women representation in the parliament helps in making women centred legislation. Therefore, representation of women in parliament makes them an important factor in the process of female empowerment which can boast the number of working women and their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Fifth hypothesis of this study dealt with the moderating role of cultural and social norms on the relationship between female labour force participation and entrepreneurial environment for females. Cultural and social norms were chosen as a moderator following Hayton and Cacciotti (2013) suggestion that “the use of cultural norms rather than cultural values will help solve inconsistencies in findings”. This hypothesis was proved which confirms this notion. As stated earlier, researchers are interested in observing the variation in the participation and performance of female entrepreneurship across countries. It is agreed that more men engage in entrepreneurial activities as compared women (Parker, 2009). This variation can be explained partly by cultural and social factors such as family structure (Acs et al., 2011). Different cultural norms discourage participation of women in business related activities. Many societies consider females to be subordinate and inferior to males. Unfortunately, working women don’t get respect in the society, and they are marginalized even in the business sector. All these discrimination based on gender inhibit women entering into entrepreneurship. Furthermore, different social norms such as childhood marriage, child bearing and domestic responsibilities, and other gender related stereotypes (Antai & Anam, 2016) may discourage participation of women in entrepreneurship. All these culture imposed barriers exclude women from any business related activity as they become “cut off from full involvement in the large society” (Pines, Lerner & Schwartz, 2010).

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes in the extant body of knowledge by empirically testing the mediating and moderating mechanisms of women political empowerment and cultural and social norms on the relationship between female labour force participation and entrepreneurial environment. Most studies on female entrepreneurship have obtained data from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Reports. This study focuses on overall entrepreneurial environment in a country instead of rate of female owned business. For this purpose, data was obtained from other sources. Similarly, this study highlights the intervening mechanism and boundary conditions regarding relationship between female participation in labour force and entrepreneurial environment for them.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Female entrepreneurs not only result in economic development of the country but also add variety to entrepreneurial mix. It is well established that individual, social and environmental factors have direct bearing on the growth of entrepreneurship in a country (Goby & Erogul, 2011). Working women are major contributors toward national income and social well being of their family. Therefore, governments should focus on making effective policies for fostering a productive entrepreneurial environment which will in-turn have a considerable effect on the job creation. There is a reciprocal interaction between participation of women in economic activities and economic growth. Enhancing the participation of females in the labour market and economic activities widens their social and economical role in the society. Realizing importance of this, many countries are working on female entrepreneurship programs which results in financial freedom, economic empowerment and growth of the country (Nguyen, Frederick & Nguyen, 2014).

A potent way to reduce poverty among women is to increase their earning by empowering them through their own business. Empowerment, in development literature, means making women significant actors in the decision making process. It is imperative that women are made an active agent in the change process of female empowerment rather than mere recipients of change. Realizing this, governments are developing different policies to ensure representation of women in parliament. One of such policy is the reservation of quota for women. Fixing a quota for women in the parliament has been proven to be an effective method to ensure women representation in the legislation process. However, mixed results of such quota have been observed as it is subject to nepotism. It is imperative to maintain a transparency to ensure true and effective representation of women.

There is also an urgent need to change social taboos. Most societies view that sole purpose of women's existence is to give birth and raise children, and look after their household. Such views are prevalent in countries with low income level. On the contrary, higher income countries have focused on the development of women and they have made half of their population an active part of their economy. Hayton, George and Zahra (2002) declare cultures which support risk taking and independent thinking to be desirable encourage entrepreneurial behaviours as compared to those ones which reinforce control, collectivism, and conformity. Therefore, governments and policy makers should focus on developing an entrepreneurial supportive culture.

Gender discriminating practices of a society may discourage women participation in economic activities. Neo classical economists believe in a long-run effect between gender (in) equality and economic growth (Seguino & Were, 2014). Therefore, governments should work on reducing gender discrimination in the economic activities and promote gender development. This will lead to more entrepreneurial initiatives from women. For example, women have less access to finance which is not readily available to them. They also face discriminatory attitude from the banks and other financial institutes. Prejudice about ability to handle credit and credibility causes women to face discriminatory attitude from banks and financial institutions. It is important that availability of credit for women may be ensured so that their business does not under perform due to poor financing.

CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship is the base of economic development especially for developing countries. These countries can benefit from the development of entrepreneurial activities, both for males and females. However, it is imperative to have an entrepreneurial environment and opportunities for the growth of entrepreneurship. With this aim in mind, this study investigates the impact of different economic, political, cultural and social factors in the growth of support environment for female entrepreneurship. Despite the increase in the number of female entrepreneurs, they still lag behind their male counterparts. This study focuses on the role of female participation in the labour market in the development of a supportive environment for female entrepreneurs because theoretical origin and underpinning of female entrepreneurship can be traced to occupation literature.

This study also demonstrates the importance of political empowerment of women, supportive cultural and social norms, and gender development in increasing women owned business. It is proposed that the relationship between participation of females in labour market and national environment conducive for female entrepreneurship is mediated by women political empowerment and moderated by cultural and social norms. Based on the model proposed, it is proved that all these factors collaborate in shaping the entrepreneurial environment of a country. Thus, this paper contributes both theoretically, by providing empirical evidence about the relationship between different factors, as well as practically by proposing certain suggestions for the policy makers. We hope that our policy makers will pursue these recommendations to improve the social and economic status of female.

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